

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

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TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
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AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
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AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
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AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS, FOR CHARGE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, PINS, PINT, LE, SY

SUBJECT: FIGHTING IN BEIRUT AREA

REF: JULY 23 PELLETREAU/DRAPER TELECON

1. YOU SHOULD GET IN TOUCH WITH FOREIGN MINISTER OR
OTHER APPROPRIATE AND AVAILABLE SYRIAN OFFICIAL. IN
ACCORD WITH REF TELECON, YOU SHOULD--WHENEVER A MAJOR
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CONFRONTATION APPEARS TO BE BREAKING OUT, AS IN THE
AL-HADATH QUARTER NOW--REITERATE THE BASIC THRUST OF
INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDANCE GIVEN YOU IN THE EARLIER FIGHTING
THIS MONTH. THESE POINTS WOULD BE:

-- TO PRESS FOR AN IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE, SO THAT NEGOTIA-
TIONS COULD BE RESUMED LEADING TO A RESOLUTION OF THE PROB-

LEMS CAUSING THE FIGHTING.

-- TO REVIEW THE EFFORTS THE U.S. HAS MADE WITH LEBANESE GOVERNMENTAL LEADERS, WITH MARONITE RIGHTIST LEADERS, WITH OTHER LEBANESE FIGURES, AND WITH THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT IN URGING RESTRAINT, COMPLIANCE WITH THE CEASE-FIRE, PARTICIPATION IN NEGOTIATIONS FOR A DISENGAGEMENT ARRANGEMENT ON THE PART OF THE MILITIAS, AND AN END TO PROVOCATIONS OF THE SYRIAN FORCES.

-- TO POINT OUT THAT THERE IS GENUINE CONCERN INTER-NATIONALLY THAT THE SYRIAN MILITARY RESPONSE TO PROVOCATIONS IS DISPROPORTIONATE AND IN ANY EVENT DOES NOT APPEAR TO ACCOMPLISH ITS PURPOSE.

-- TO URGE THAT SYRIA EXPLORE WAYS, WITH THE COOPERATION OF THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT, WHEREBY A NEGOTIATED SECURITY ARRANGEMENT IN THE BEIRUT AREA MIGHT BE ACHIEVED, WITH THE MARONITE MILITIAS FOR THEIR PART AGREEING TO REDUCE THEIR VISIBILITY AND THEIR ACTIVITIES AND WITH THE SYRIAN FORCES FOR THEIR PART ENCOURAGING LEBANESE POLICE OR MILITARY UNITS TO TAKE OVER THE SECURITY ROLE AT CONFRONTATION POINTS.

2. IN ADDITION, YOU SHOULD WEAVE IN THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

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-- WE HAVE BEEN FULLY AWARE OF THE GREAT RESTRAINT EXERCISED BY THE SYRIANS SINCE THE JULY 6 CEASEFIRE IN THE FACE OF MANY PROVOCATIONS AND A HIGH CASUALTY RATE.

-- IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE U.S. KNOW EXACTLY WHAT SYRIAN INTENTIONS ARE, NOT ONLY AS REGARDS SYRIAN HANDLING OF THE PRESENT SERIES OF CONFRONTATIONS, BUT ALSO OVER THE LONGER RUN. MANY IN THE LEBANESE-AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN THE U.S., WHO ARE IN TOUCH WITH THEIR FRIENDS AND RELATIVES IN LEBANON, ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY UPSET. BECAUSE OF THE WAY NEWS STORIES ARE CARRIED, THEY KNOW LITTLE ABOUT SYRIAN RESTRAINT, BUT THEY ARE IMMEDIATELY MADE AWARE, THROUGH DRAMATIC NEWS ACCOUNTS, WHENEVER SYRIAN FORCES UNDERTAKE MAJOR RETALIATORY ACTION. THIS IS WHY IT IS IMPORTANT THAT SYRIA INFORM THE U.S. OF ITS PLANS AND VIEWS OF THE FUTURE. THIS WOULD BE ENTIRELY CONSISTENT WITH THE NATURE OF THE U.S.-SYRIAN DIALOGUE ON MATTERS LEBANESE GOING BACK INTO 1976. THIS DIALOGUE, WE ARE CONVINCED, HAS BEEN HELPFUL TO SYRIAN AS WELL AS U.S. INTERESTS.

-- WE ARE FULLY AWARE THAT SYRIA WOULD NOT WANT TO BE

SEEN AS BACKING AWAY FROM PROVOCATIONS AND CHALLENGES.
AT THE SAME TIME, WE HAVE BEGUN TO CONCLUDE THAT A
LENGTHY COOLING OFF PERIOD IS ESSENTIAL IN WHICH BOTH
THE SYRIANS AND THOSE WHO CONFRONT THEM MAY HAVE TO BE
SATISFIED WITH A LESS THAN IDEAL OUTCOME. WHAT WE WOULD
LIKE TO DO IS TO CONSULT WITH THE SYRIANS ON WAYS IN
WHICH THE U.S. COULD BE SUPPORTIVE, NOT ONLY OF COMPARATIVE
SYRIAN RESTRAINT, BUT ALSO OF POSITIVE SYRIAN STEPS TO
FIND A COMPROMISE, NEGOTIATED ARRANGEMENT.

-- IN THIS LATTER CONNECTION, WE ARE NOT PROPOSING FORMALLY
BUT WE WOULD LIKE THE SYRIANS TO CONSIDER THE THOUGHT
THAT, AT SOME QUIET MOMENT IN THE EARLY FUTURE, IT MIGHT
CONSIDER REITERATING PUBLICLY--THROUGH AN AUTHORIZED
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SPOKESMAN--THAT SYRIA IS AS DESIROUS AS ANYONE OF TURNING
OVER RESPONSIBILITY OF MAINTAINING SECURITY TO THE
LEBANESE ARMY AND SECURITY AUTHORITIES, AND THAT IT IS
READY TO BEGIN THE FIRST PHASED WITHDRAWAL JUST AS SOON
AS THE LEBANESE AUTHORITIES ARE READY TO TAKE OVER
EXPANDED SECURITY DUTIES, EVEN ON LIMITED SCALE WHICH
PRESENT REALITIES DICTATE. AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF THIS KIND,
OR A COMMUNICATION TO THE U.S. TO THIS EFFECT, COULD DRAW
THE STING FROM ATTACKS ON SYRIA'S ROLE AND INTENTIONS IN
LEBANON. YOU NEED NOT RPT NOT RAISE THIS LAST NAMED
THOUGHT IF YOU SUSPECT THAT IT WOULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE
AT THIS TIME, BUT WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO EXPLORE THE IDEA
AT THE EARLIEST PROPITIOUS MOMENT. VANCE

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